Puppet show

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Puppet show

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Summary

Alastor glared at the king, one hand hovering over his wound to block the sight form Lucifer's prying eyes. The distinct vines of fear wove around his heart. Only, this fear had a bitter tinge to it. This fear was a variant he didn't recognise. Vulnerability.

Or: Another fanfiction about Lucifer healing Al's angelic wound

Notes

Random author's note: I watched a therapist analysis of Alastor's character (on YouTube by Georgia Dow) before writing this

I do think Alastor doesn't feel emotions the same way as "normal people" (not because of his sexuality) so I tried exploring that

See the end of the work for more notes

Alastor wasn't one for getting sentimental or emotional. It wasn't that he didn't possess emotions, simply that he viewed them as obstacles that hindered progress and caused distraction. He had also come to realise that the emotions he did feel were not quite to the same depth as the emotions felt by everyone else.

However, he had come to realise that, through no fault of his own, he did have some kind of emotional reaction to the members of the hotel he co-ran.

With Nifty and Charlie there was a distinct fondness that scratched beneath his ribs. Vaggie didn't cause too much of a riot. With her, it was something of acknowledgment, of recognition. Towards Angle Dust, there was a hint of wariness. Husker and Sir Pentious caused a reaction of vague amusement.

And then there was the matter of Lucifer Morningstar, Charlie's childish and eccentric father. Ever since the day of the day phone call, he'd showed up more to the hotel. Alastor had come to view his visits as highly entertaining, some of the top quality stuff. That was if he was in the mood for that sort of entertainment. There were times in which Lucifer was more of a bothersome thing than a delight.

The prickling under Alastor's skin at the appearance of the king of hell was one he recognised very well. Annoyance. A hint of enjoyment at Lucifer's jealousy. The thrill of entertainment.

Alastor viewed the world through a kind of detached lens. He felt that the souls and overlords he met were simply smaller puppets on a large, overpriced stage playing out their silly lives for his entertainment.

Lucifer Morningstar just happened to be another one of the puppets some grand being was tugging the strings of and demanding that it dance.

Perhaps this was a dangerous view to hold. Perhaps that was why, when Alastor stumbled to his studio with a rip across his chest, that he'd been shaken to his core.

It was a reminder. It was a warning. It was a realisation.

He wasn't untouchable. He wasn't immune to it all. He could bleed. He could die.

To think he'd almost done just that on a suicide mission to protect Charlie and the hotel. To think the constraints of the deal he'd made demanded such a thing.

His heart had thrust itself against the bars of its cage again and again like the heavy bass of a drum. The faint whispers of chains pressed against the cold flesh of his throat and wrists. They were imaginary. He knew they were simply in his head, that the owner of his soul wasn't summoning them into existence. She was far away from this hotel, from the rubble of this studio.

Still, Alastor lifted a hand to press against the phantom ring of metal. His fingertips only found the cool skin of his throat, the ridge of his trachea. Subconsciously, his hand wrapped

around his neck and squeezed. Not enough to hurt, just enough to make him feel grounded, to make him feel real. The blood seeping through his blazer only dampened it.

Alastor wanted to stop the beating in his chest. Fear was a useless emotion, something he'd tossed away even before he died. He wanted to find some remnants of angels, to tear into flesh and hear the crunch of bones and know he was in control, that he was something to be feared.

Instead, he was here leaning against the counter of his controls to keep himself on his feet. His stupid smile was still stitched on his face, still branded into his skin. He wished he could drag his claws down the slope of it and feel it shred. But that would be an act of self destruction. Alastor wasn't one to indulge in such things.

Outside, among the rubble, he could hear talking and singing and there were flashes of light. He wanted to go out, to show them all he had bounced back like nothing had happened. But he couldn't bring himself to move.

It was only when the light stopped flashing that the erratic flapping beneath his ribs slowed. His hand around his neck lowered. Self control. Confidence. He inhaled. Felt his shadow slither closer in anticipation.

When he exhaled, he was among the familiar faces of the members in the hotel. His body moved on autopilot. Words left his lips and he was moving, but he wasn't fully present. He vaguely registered the hotel seemed larger in its new form. He could feel Lucifer's glare burning through his skin, could sense Husk's displeasure at his return.

He couldn't bring himself to feel a stir of care in return.

This hotel was Charlie's dream. Alastor was bound to Charlie by more than the mere deal he'd struck with her. He couldn't help feeling a vague sense of what he imagined a bird would experience when it's flight feathers were clipped away. Or the plummeting weight of dread a declawed cat faced when it tried and failed to grasp ahold of a surface after it didn't quite make the leap.

This hotel may have been Charlie's dream, but it was slowly becoming Alastor's jailer.

After the show and dance, everyone slowly made their way back into the hotel. Angel Dust and Husker checked out the new bar. Charlie and Vaggie went up to their shared room. Nifty went off with Fat Nuggets.

Alastor found his way back to his studio.

He didn't particularly like the sensations crawling under his skin like worms at being in here again. It had been a kind of safe haven, a place in which he felt the most like himself.

Now, with the droplets of red drying on the floor and a wall fallen in, he could practically taste the post-battle dread. He needed to fix this place. He needed his staff back in one piece.

First things first, he needed a new coat, a new shirt. He didn't keep spares on him. Not when he never let anyone get close enough to touch him.

Alastor peeled off his red coat and placed it on the control panel. He unclipped his waist coat and tossed that onto the floor. The buttoned up shirt beneath was stained red at the centre of it.

Alastor had always admired the vibrancy of blood. He'd found it fascinating how it gathered and pooled, how dark it got, the sheer quantity of it that someone could produce. Now, as he peeled off his shirt to take a better look at the wound, he thought it looked very much like watercolour paint. He vaguely wondered if it reacted the same way.

The shirt was ruined. That much was apparent. Blood was drying in places and holding the fabric firm and Alastor was almost tempted to salvage whatever damp blood remained. But the taste of one's own blood did not compare to the luxury of another's.

Alastor summoned a green flame and watched the fabric burn.

When it was nothing but charcoal dust, he brushed his hands off and looked down at his chest. Treating and cleaning wounds was a tiresome thing and unfortunately this one seemed to need both.

And then Alastor's eye caught on the strange yellow glow to the wound. In all his years of carving and cleaving, he had never seen a wound that emitted light. Something cold sunk into the very core of his veins. This was an angelic wound caused by holy light. It would not heal. Alastor did not have the resources to deal with such a thing.

"Wow! That does not look good."

Alastor's head snapped up, ears back, eyes wide when he heard the king of hell's voice. Lucifer had taken the form of a small bird and was eyeing the wound with a cocked head. Alastor instinctively grabbed the first thing within reach- a broken off lever- and tossed it at Lucifer. The king dodged the object with one side step.

"Guess your part of the battle didn't go so well, huh?" Lucifer shifted into the humanoid form Alastor had grown to recognise, a smug expression on his face.

Alastor glared at the king, one hand hovering over his wound to block the sight form Lucifer's prying eyes. The distinct vines of fear wove around his heart. Only, this fear had a bitter tinge to it. This fear was a variant he didn't recognise. Vulnerability.

The only counter-active to such a feeling was fighting back, levelling the playing fields. Hitting where it hurt. Alastor curled his lip in a mock-snarl.

"At least I showed up for the battle on time. *I* was there when Charlie asked me to be."

Other than a frown of disapproval, Lucifer didn't particularly react to his words. That wouldn't do. Before he could add onto what he'd said, however, Lucifer spoke.

“Fair point. You did keep Charlie safe until I got there. I suppose that means *that* is a result of protecting her.”

This was new. This acceptance and acknowledgment was new and different. Alastor wasn’t sure how to process it. Thankfully, he hardly had time to dwell on it before Lucifer was walking towards him. Alastor felt his hackles rise, felt his stance widen defensively.

”Can I see what I’m working with?” Lucifer asked, a hand on his hip, his head tilted. He’d stopped exactly three steps from Alastor.

“You will not be working with anything. I have the supplies to cater for this inconvenience. I do not require your assistance.” Alastor’s voice was a warning. He shouldn’t have burnt his shirt. This was too much exposure.

“Adam struck you.” Lucifer was stating a fact. Alastor vaguely wondered what his head would look like mounted on the snapped segment of his staff. Would he still have those perfect red circles on his cheeks? “I have the ability to fix this.”

Radio static fizzled in the air around the two of them. Wariness was accented with the click of a station change. Red eyes glared into slit-like pupils. Lucifer’s gaze was calm, determined. Alastor didn’t want the man’s hands anywhere near him.

As if sensing Alastor’s thoughts, Lucifer’s gaze softened. It only served to put Alastor more on edge.

”If I don’t heal this, it *will* kill you.” Lucifer’s voice was careful, quiet. Alastor wondered if his tongue tasted any better than a mortal’s. “And Charlie likes having you around so…Let me fix this.”

“No.”

Despite Alastor’s lack in emotional involvement of his own, he had come to recognise the look of them on others. Lucifer’s brows twitched, his mouth turned down. Confusion. Annoyance.

“You’d rather die than let me help you?” It was more of a demand than a question.

Alastor wanted to bite back that he didn’t need help, that he was self sufficient and relying on others for anything was a foolish act. But he knew a lie when he tasted it on his tongue. He knew Lucifer was the only one who knew how to help. Vaggie didn’t possess the skills for that. There was no way Alastor would even consider asking her if she did.

”What would you like in return?” Alastor’s voice was low, eyes narrowing, head tilted.

Lucifer blinked. “What?”

”I can’t offer you my soul, unfortunately, but I’m sure there’s something-“

”I’m not making a deal with you.” Lucifer’s voice was firm. “I’m helping you because you helped Charlie. After I heal you, we’re even.”

Radio static hummed low and careful. Alastor took in Lucifer's face as if he was scanning a document. Over the years in hell, he'd learnt the various tells souls possessed that gave them away. He'd also learnt the various signs of honesty.

The way Lucifer was looking at him now so openly was something he wasn't used to. Everyone here had ulterior motives for kind actions. Their words and behaviour were unreliable to determine their intentions.

Lucifer, however, said what he meant. He was honest and kind hearted to a fault; traits he'd passed down to Charlie for sure. Alastor didn't know how to navigate that. Not with someone who finally gave him the thrill of an even playing field. Not with someone who could hit back and make it threatening.

"Will this process require contact?"

"Not if you don't want it to."

Alastor nodded, lowering his hand. It felt a lot like stripping away his defences, like peeling off a protective cloak. He turned his face away from Lucifer's. That slowed some of the uncomfortable burning under his skin.

True to his word, Lucifer didn't touch Alastor, didn't even take another step towards him. Alastor felt-more than saw- the stir of something in his wound, against his chest. It was a pulling sensation. Unfamiliar. Foreign. Alastor had to force himself not to fight back against it.

When he did finally steal a slow glance at Lucifer's face, the fallen angel was watching the wound intently, fingers moving in the air before him. Thin beams of pure golden light danced from his fingertips like dribbles of honey and thread. Looking at him when he was so invested in what he was doing, Alastor did not understand how the angels thought casting him out would do them good. Clearly, he was diligent and thorough in his work.

When the angelic light was extracted, Lucifer wove thin stitches into the skin around it. Alastor did glance down at his chest for that. They looked almost hair-like in diameter. Alastor was surprised they managed to hold.

"There you go," Lucifer said, his expression returning to the grin that often accompanied his presence. "Better than new."

"I highly doubt that." Despite his words, Alastor could feel his past strength returning. He'd be able to fix his staff shortly.

Lucifer scoffed. "You were just healed by *holy light.* That's better than new."

"Perhaps."

The pair of them watched each other. Lucifer seemed unamused. Alastor, on the other hand, was very much amused. With full strength, he could commit to the banter between them and have more than feeble actions to back them up.

”You’re something else.” This was muttered from Lucifer’s lips and it caused Alastor’s grin to widen.

“Yes, so I’ve been told.” He snapped his fingers and a new shirt appeared, buttons done and all. Alastor brushed out the scattered wrinkles with a showing flick. “Pleasure doing business with you, quite a pleasure, now if you’ll excuse me I have matters of my own to attend to.”

Lucifer watched him for a moment more before taking a step back and shaking his head.

”Of course. Wouldn’t want to interrupt those-“ Lucifer took a look around at the rubble of the studio. “-*important things* you've got going on.”

Alastor watched with a flicker of…something as Lucifer shifted into a bird and flew out the nearest window. A part of him wanted to grab ahold of that frail form, to squeeze and feel the breaking of such a small structure. Another part of him knew it wouldn’t quite be satisfactory.

Alastor thought killing Lucifer as a whole would not be entirely satisfactory. It would rid him of a worthy opponent, rid him of a rather delightful back and forth. He would feel fairly disappointed at such a loss when Lucifer was supposed to be immortal in the way that mattered. And then there were the more bothersome segments of the matter, such as Charlie’s rise to becoming queen.

Still, it was a perfectly good fantastical situation to indulge in; the matter of the murder itself, not the aftermath.

Lucifer would probably bleed liquid gold like all those other angels. Such a feast was a rare treat, a slice of romanticised heaven itself. He wondered vaguely what Lucifer’s jaw would look like entirely unhinged, what kind of sound the unhinging itself would create.

Alastor brushed away the thought with a shake of his head. He had more important matters to attend to. He had a staff to mend and a studio to rebuild. Lucifer and his strange ways could wait.

End Notes

Started as a character analysis, ended as a radioapple exploration

Kudos and comments are always appreciated

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